

Message Text

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E.O. 11652:N/A
TAGS: PINT PINS SHUM ES
SUBJ: FOUR OF EL SALVADOR'S SIX CATHOLIC BISHOPS ISSUE DECLAR-
ATION DENYING SUPPORT TO FECCAS-UTC

SUMMARY. ON AUGUST 28, 1978, FOUR OF THE SIX BISHOPS OF EL
SALVADOR ISSUED A DECLARATION UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE EPIS-
COPAL CONFERENCE STATING THAT CLERGY MUST ABSTAIN FROM COLLABORATING
DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY WITH FECCAS-UTC AND SIMILAR ORGANIZATIONS.
ARCHBISHOP ROMERO AND ANOTHER BISHOP DID NOT SIGN DECLARATION
AND ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE ON AUGUST 29 STATING THAT DECLARATION
COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED OFFICIAL DOCUMENT OF THE EPISCOPAL
CONFERENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. ON AUGUST 29, 1978, A DECLARATION
FROM THE SECRETARIAT-GENERAL OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFER-
ENCE OF EL SALVADOR (CEDES) STATED THAT "WE THE
BISHOPS . . . DECLARE THAT THE ORGANIZATIONS OF A
POLITICAL TYPE AND OF A LEFTIST TENDENCY KNOWN AS THE
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'CHRISTIAN FEDERATION OF SALVADORAN CAMPESINOS' (FECCAS)
AND ' UNION OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS' (UTC) ARE NOT ORGANI-
ZATIONS OF THE CHURCH AND, CONSEQUENTLY, HAVE NO RIGHT TO SEEK
THE VINDICATION OF THE CHURCH OR TO USE IT AS AN INSTRUMENT
FOR THEIR OWN ENDS." THE DECLARATION STATED THAT FECCAS
HAD ORIGINATED AS AN "ORGANIZATION SEEKING TO VINDICATE
THE RIGHTS OF THE CAMPESINOS." HOWEVER, IT WENT ON TO STATE

THAT FECCAS HAD SOON TURNED TO POLITICS, "SEEKING POLITICAL POWER AND TO UNITE ITSELF WITH THE UTC; AND ABOVE ALL, AFTER AFFILIATING THEMSELVES WITH THE POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY BLOC (BPR), BOTH ORGANIZATIONS HAD DECLARED THEMSELVES FOLLOWERS OF THE MARXIST-LENINIST IDEOLOGY OF THE BPR."

2. DECLARATION GOES ON TO SAY THAT SUCH A STANCE HAS CREATED "CONFUSION AMONG THE FAITHFUL OF THE CHURCH AND A SERIOUS PROBLEM OF CONSCIENCE . . . FROM MANY SIDES HAVE COME ANGUISHED AND PRESSING QUESTIONS: DOES THE CHURCH ACCEPT THE CONCEPTS OF CLASS WARFARE AND VIOLENT REVOLUTION? DOES IT ACCEPT THE CONCEPTS OF DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM AND ITS RESULTING ATHEISM? HAS THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH BEEN REDUCED TO THAT OF POLITICAL ACTION? MUST WE LIVE OUR FAITH WITHIN MARXIST CONCEPTS?" QUOTING VARIOUS PAPAL ENCYCLICALS AND CHURCH DOCUMENTS, THE DECLARATION REFERS TO BISHOPS' STATEMENT (PARA 1) AND GOES ON TO SAY: "THOSE PRIESTS AND MEMBERS OF RELIGIOUS ORDERS WHO DIRECT EDUCATIONAL CENTERS AND CHURCH COMMUNITIES MUST ABSTAIN FROM COLLABORATING DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY WITH FECCAS AND UTC AND WITH SIMILAR ORGANIZATIONS WHOSE ACTIVITIES ARE CONFINED TO THE STRICTLY POLITICAL FIELD (THE TAKING OF POWER) AND WHICH ARE, BESIDES, ORGANIZATIONS OF THE LEFT."

3. THE DECLARATION WAS SIGNED BY: PEDRO ARNOLDO
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APARICIO Y QUINTANILLA, BISHOP OF SAN VICENTE AND PRESIDENT OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE; BENJAMIN BARRERA Y REYES, BISHOP OF SANTA ANA; JOSE EDUARDO ALVAREZ, BISHOP OF SAN MIGUEL; AND MARCO RENE REVELO, AUXILIARY BISHOP OF SAN SALVADOR. IT WAS NOT SIGNED BY OSCAR A. ROMERO, ARCHBISHOP OF SAN SALVADOR OR BY ARTURO RIVERA Y DAMAS, BISHOP OF SANTIAGO DE MARIA, THE OTHER TWO MEMBERS OF CEDES. ON AUGUST 29, ARCHBISHOP ROMERO AND BISHOP RIVERA Y DAMAS, IN A COMMUNIQUE EMANATING FROM THE ARCHBISHOPRIC OF SAN SALVADOR, STATED THAT "IT WAS NOT CEDES AS SUCH THAT SIGNED THE DECLARATION OF AUGUST 28, 1978, BUT RATHER SOME BISHOPS BELONGING TO CEDES." COMMUNIQUE WENT ON TO STATE THAT "THE CHURCH IDENTIFIES ITSELF WITH THE CAUSES OF THE POOR WHEN THEY SEEK TO EXERCISE THEIR RIGHTS . . . THIS SOLIDARITY WITH THESE JUST OBJECTIVES IS NOT LIMITED TO CERTAIN ORGANIZATIONS, WHETHER THEY CALL THEMSELVES CHRISTIAN OR NOT, WHETHER THEY ARE LEGALLY OR IN REALITY PROTECTED BY THE GOVERNMENT, OR WHETHER THEY ARE INDEPENDENT OF OR OPPOSED TO THE GOVERNMENT." THE COMMUNIQUE RECOMMENDS TO "THE CHRISTIANS OF EL SALVADOR THAT THEY BELIEVE IN PEACE AND NOT PUT ALL THEIR FAITH IN VIOLENT METHODS, WORK FOR JUSTICE,

REPUDIATE FANATICAL VIOLENCE, AND EXHAUST PEACEFUL
REMEDIES." COPIES OF BOTH THE CEDES DECLARATION AND
ARCHBISHOP'S COMMUNIQUE WILL BE POUCHED TO THE SALVADORAN
DESK. END UNCLASSIFIED.

4. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. WHILE IT IS ARGUABLE THAT
DECLARATION OF FOUR BISHOPS MAY NOT BE AN OFFICIAL
CEDES DOCUMENT BECAUSE ARCHBISHOP ROMERO AND BISHOP
RIVERA Y DAMAS DID NOT SIGN IT, PAO REPORTED THAT HE HAD
LEARNED THAT GOTH ROMERO AND RIVERA Y DAMAS HAD ATTENDED
MORNING SESSION OF CEDES WHERE DECLARATION WAS DISCUSSED.
PAO SAID THAT ROMERO AND RIVERA Y DAMAS HAD BOTH ABSENTED
THEMSELVES FROM THE AFTERNOON SESSION WHEN IT APPEARED
THAT A MAJORITY OF EL SALVADOR'S SXI BISHOPS WERE READY
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TO SIGN DECLARATION. IN AN INTERVIEW ON SEPTEMBER 3
ATTENDED BY PAO, ARCHBISHOP ROMERO TOLD JOURNALIST
TAD SZULC (VISITING EL SALVADOR UNDER ICA AUSPICES)
THAT CATHOLIC CHURCH COULD NOT AFFORD TO IGNORE
POPULAR ORGANIZATION SEEKING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THOSE
SALVADORANS IN STRAITENED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CIRCUM-
STANCES. ACCORDING TO ARTICLE THAT APPEARED IN
SEPTEMBER 1 EDITION OF "LA PRENSA GRAFICA", DECLARATION
ISSUED BY FOUR BISHOPS WAS PROMPTED BY A REQUEST FROM
THE HOLY SEE THAT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH AND
FECCAS-UTC BE CLARIFIED IN ORDER TO CLEAR UP ANY
AMBIGUITIES IN PUBLIC OPINION.

5. COMMENT: THIS EVENT ILLUSTRATES THE SERIOUS DIVISION
WHICH EXISTS IN THE CHURCH IN EL SALVADOR. IT SHOULD BE
REMEMBERED THAT ADMINISTRATIVELY THE ARCHBISHOP OF SAN
SALVADOR IS ONLY ONE OF THE SIX BISHOPS IN EL SAJTVADOR,
HE HAS NO JURISDICTION OR SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITY OVER
THE OTHERS, AND EACH REPORTS DIRECTLY TO ROME ON AN EQUAL
BASIS. ALSO, THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE IS ONLY A CO-
ORDINATING BODY AND CANNOT MAKE DECISIONS BY MAJORITY
VOTE BINDING ON ALL. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE.
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